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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 002414

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [KOLY](#) [PK](#) [KZ](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: XINJIANG: OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY BRINGS TIGHT
SECURITY

REF: A. FBIS/OSC CPP20080619968039
[1](#)B. FBIS/OSC JPP20080503969010

Classified By: Acting Political Section Chief Ben Moeling. Reasons 1.4
(b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: One government contact in Xinjiang described Urumqi as a city paralyzed by inconvenient security measures, while Urumqi netizens on a Xinjiang Government-run news portal complained of minor hassles. Local media were more upbeat; they took the arrival of the Olympic torch relay to Urumqi City on June 17 (described on the Urumqi Government website as a "passionate and loving tour") as an opportunity to tout the local culture and unity of the region's ethnically diverse population. The torch arrived amid rampant local rumors of widespread detentions of Uighurs. Multiple contacts confirm that there are rumors of detentions, but all voiced confidence that such stringent measures will end after the Olympics. During a visit to Kashgar one month in advance of the torch's arrival, PolOff witnessed a number of police checkpoints closely monitoring all inter-city traffic in Kashgar Prefecture, with the expressly-stated purpose of ensuring "Olympic security." End Summary.

Local Measures

[1](#)2. (C) Xinjiang contacts describe extensive, and intrusive, security measures related to the transit of the Olympic torch. XJASS scholar of Islam and XUAR People's Political Consultative Conference (PPCC) member Ahmadjan Hasan (strictly protect) complained of being forced to be at his office by 8:00 a.m. Beijing time, which is only 6:00 a.m. local time, on June 17 to proceed to the Olympic torch relay site. His young sons' primary school required all students to be at school by 8:00 a.m. Beijing time (school usually starts at 10:00 a.m. Beijing time), after which time no one was allowed to leave until the relay-related events had concluded. Similarly, Hasan's wife (strictly protect), an accountant at a state-owned oil company, was forced to "work overtime" all the way through the night, after sitting through meetings on Olympic security in the afternoon of June [1](#)16. Hasan also endured such security lectures the same day, and presumed that most companies, departments and organizations in Urumqi had held similar meetings.

[1](#)3. (C) Hasan told PolOff that the Olympic torch did not pass through the city's predominantly Uighur Erdaoqiao neighborhood, traditionally a big draw for Han tourists, but did not speculate on the reason. Instead, the relay proceeded down People's Road, Beijing Road, Peace Road, North Liberation Road, East Wind Road, Friendship Road and New China Road all the way to People's Square, giving a definitively Communist Party flavor to the event. Foreign journalists reported that officials requested that Urumqi

residents watch the festivities from home on television out of concern for "safety," and a television news broadcast forbade the shouting of slogans that "damage the image of the city or nation."

14. (C) An article on the Urumqi Government website declared that "on June 17, the Beijing Olympic torch will begin its passionate and loving tour through Xinjiang, which covers one-sixth of the Motherland's landmass." While local media hailed the Urumqi leg of the torch relay as a grand success, local residents joked in a government-run portal's online forum about the various program glitches and personal inconveniences. One netizen under the screen name Huyang Linshu expressed embarrassment that the television announcer covering the relay made repeated mistakes, including referring to Taiwan as "Taibei Province." Another resident, who appears to be Han based on his profile picture, bemoaned that all the banks, post offices and gas stations were closed and common people could not even approach the event. "How can we possibly welcome the Olympics in such a way?" he asked.

Similar Tales in Kashgar

15. (C) A taxi driver in Kashgar told PolOff that by midday June 17 the Government had already forbidden taxis from driving anywhere in the city. The relay, which according to media began at 9:30 a.m. June 18, reportedly covered only a 6.5 kilometer loop from Kashgar's famous Id Kah mosque to People's Square. Hong Kong media reported that the route was "lined with hundreds of black-gloved police and paramilitary

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personnel in new uniforms" (ref A). Askar (strictly protect), a bus driver, said no taxis or buses had been allowed on the roads, and confirmed reports in foreign media of attendance restrictions saying that "even if you wanted to go, you would not be allowed." A Uighur tour guide in Kashgar who usually has few positive words to say about the Chinese Government, told PolOff in early May that he was looking forward to the Olympic torch relay coming to Kashgar. "It will let more people know about Kashgar, which will be good for tourism. What's wrong with that?" he said. However, the afternoon after the relay, the same tour guide was less enthusiastic, having stayed at home for the entire two days, June 17-18, to watch the relay on television.

16. (C) The tone of the state media broadcast during the Kashgar leg of the relay was similar to that in Urumqi. Zhang Bin, the disgraced China Central Television sportscaster, whose wife interrupted a major Olympics-related press conference earlier in 2008 to expose Zhang for his infidelity, made a surprising appearance in the relay. Asked by a state media journalist to describe his feelings, he said, "(Kasghar) is very special, the roads are clean and you can feel that many very common Chinese people live here; that the influence of the Olympics can spread to this western city roughly 4500 kilometers from Beijing is a victory for the Olympics."

Kashgar: Police Checkpoints Monitor Inter-city Traffic

17. (C) During a May 10-14 tourism visit to Kashgar, PolOff passed through three police checkpoints on the three-hour route from Kashgar (Kashi in Mandarin) to Yarkand (Shache). The checkpoints had anywhere from three to ten police officers. A banner at one checkpoint just south of Kashgar indicated that the extra security was to protect highway safety for the Olympics and called on citizens to "resolutely win the great battle for Olympic highway security." Checkpoints were also on the road south to Tashkurgan, which then continues to Pakistan, and the road to Ulugchat (Wuqia in Mandarin), which continues to the Kyrgyz border. One checkpoint on the road to Ulugchat even had an Olympic

security slogan burned into the soil of the mountain behind the checkpoint. While strolling through an old, overwhelmingly Uighur section of downtown Kashgar, PolOff saw a police van drive by that was filled with armed officers wearing bulletproof vests. A Kashgar contact said such "drills" have been common this year.

¶18. (C) PolOff's driver en route to Yarkand said the checkpoints were put up in April, and that the police were focused only on "the locals," meaning the Uighurs. He said "the locals" are often patted down at such checkpoints. The driver said he assumed that the checkpoints would be gone after the Olympics. At a checkpoint between Ulugchat and Kashgar on May 12, PolOff witnessed police stop a bus full of Uighurs. All passengers were forced to get off the bus and submit to an inspection.

Rumors of Mass Detentions Across Xinjiang

¶19. (C) Multiple Uighur contacts acknowledged that they have heard rumors of recent mass detentions in Xinjiang. These rumors track with allegations made by overseas Uighur groups (ref B). On June 6, a Uighur currency trader (strictly protect) at the Horgos Pass, just northwest of Yining city on the Kazakh border, estimated that about 100-200 Uighurs have been detained around Horgos and Yining in the previous two months. The trader thought that the round up was likely related to the Olympics, and assumed that all suspects would be released after August. A Hui restaurateur (strictly protect) in Beijing, who used to live in Xinjiang's Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, said he has also heard of such arrests. "A young Uighur from Kashgar told me the other day the police are arresting people on the street just for looking funny; it sounds horrible," he stated.

¶10. (C) A Uighur-speaking AmCit (strictly protect) on a research fellowship in Kashgar told PolOff that a Uighur friend (strictly protect) of his in Bachu (Mandarin name) told him that he believed "two- to three-thousand people" had been detained this year. The Bachu resident held that he personally knew around one hundred people jailed, and speculated that the causes of arrests were for such things as "being too religious" or "teaching the Qu'ran to their children." Public Security Bureau officials PolOff contacted in Urumqi and Yining would not comment on security measures

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taken in the lead up to the Olympics.
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